BARRY DIPS INTO THE DEPTHS

Hunts Dramatic Material on 2d Avenue After Facing Unfolded Folding Typewriter for Six Days Without Working Up a Thought Which Wasn't as Dead as the Toddle-Top or a Homebrew Joke—On the Trail of Characters That "Growl and Curse and Snarl"—Experiments With "Humanity in the Raw" Fail to Produce the Story That Would Wring Hearts—"Me for Comedy," Says Barry.

BY SEWELL FORD.

"WHAT'S the matter with you and that Barry Platt?" asks Inez, here the other day, as we were clearing away the luncheon dishes in our East Eide studio.

She's a lovely girl, Inez, and she has her good points, but I wouldn't go so far as to say she was 100 per cent perfect. No. For instance, this way she has of tacking a "that" to the names of people she don't care much about is sometimes a bit raw, especially when they're your best friends. But, knowing Inez, I stand for it.

"Where do you grab off the idea there is anything the matter between us, Inez?" I demands.

"Well, he don't come around so much now," suggests Inez. "You ain't mad with each other; eh, Trilby May?"

"No, Inez," says I. "If it will relieve your mind any, I will assure you that our long-distance romance has not as yet gone on the rocks. I hope it isn't going to disappoint you, either, to learn that our little affair, so far as I know, is just where it has been for the last six months. We haven't gone in for any secret nuptials, and there's been no grand crash. We've just been drifting along as good pals."

"Huh!" says Inez. "If I had a feller——"

"Yes, I know," says I. "But yours is a passionate nature. You either love 'em or leave 'em. I'm not that kind. I will admit that I'm rather fond of Barry. He's a nice boy, and all that. But for some reason that I haven't had psycho-analyzed I am not yet ready to tag him as the only man in the world and go bounding into matrimony as Mrs. Barry Platt. I prefer to remain Trilby May Dodge a while longer—single, jobless and unfettered."

"Huh!" echoes Inez, with doubt showing in her big gray eyes.

"Oh, very well," says I. "I'll call him up on the phone and tell him to come around and report. I know the answer, though. He's been plugging away at a play which he wants to have ready for Ames Hunt to read early next month, and when Barry gets to burning the midnight kilowatt he's no more socially inclined than a dog worrying a bone. However, it will do him good to break loose for a few hours. I'll see if I can get him now."

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I could. There was nothing chirky about his tone as he agreed to drop around in an hour or so and stay for dinner, and when he did finally come dragging into the studio he was quite as cheerful as the left-hand hind plume on a hearse. By way of merry greeting he sighed and slumped into a chair.

"Why all the hilarity, old dear?" I asked. "You've got a face like a yard of crepe, your mouth corners are sagged and your eyes are as bright as a couple of boiled onions. Run out your tongue and let's see how thick the fur is."

"Don't kid me, Trilby May," says he. "If you do I—I shall blubber. What I need now is kind words and plenty of 'em."

"That's a big order from a bankrupt firm," says I. "I'll have to think it over first. Now just what is the trouble?"

You couldn't guess. That is, you could't unless you have acquired a Greenwich Village disposition somewhere and have had the same symptoms. It may sound foolish and unconvincing to you, too, but all that had reduced Barry from a bright and snappy young sport in a checked suit to a sallow-faced human wreck was the fact that for six days he had been facing an unfolded folding typewriter without having been able to write a word.

"It's an awful thing to confess, Trilby May," says he, "but I've run dry."

"After producing one whole play?" I asked.

He nodded. "I know," says he, "that 'The Prince and the Flapper' wasn't such a tremendous magnum opus that it should exhaust any ordinary brain, but that's the way it looks. And when I came back from a two months' vacation last week I thought my head was just full of brilliant ideas. I was mistaken. Day after day I've sat at my desk, and night after night, without working up a thought that wasn't as dead as the toddle-top or a home-brew joke. So I must be a false alarm, a washout, a genuine flop. I decided that night before last. That's why I haven't been around. I didn't have the face."

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"WELL, you've got face enough now, Barry boy," says I. "Face that is enough to discourage real genius. Now the first thing we do will be to go over to Broadway and get your noble brow fitted to a brand-new straw kelley."

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OF course, I don't know the psychology of it, but a man in a new straw hat always looks as though he was sitting on the world, or about to. And if he looks that way he must feel something of the sort. Anyway, after Barry had picked out a glistening new split sennit with a not too fancy band he did hold his chin a trifle high. And he was able to talk a bit more rationally about his work.

"You know, Trilby May," says he, "I'm not going to do another of those silly comedies. Absolutely not. I mean to try for something real and big and vital this time, not some piffling thing in three acts that the critics will call a pleasant evening's entertainment. Anyone can write that stuff. What I'm after is a strong, gripping theme; scenes that will show real life—life in the raw; and tense, primitive emotions. No smooth, clever dialogue. My characters will growl and snarl and curse each other, for I' going down into the depths after 'em. For that's where you find real tragedy, and genuine humor. The laughs will be ghastly, though. They'll come from brutish lips, from souls writhing in agony, from minds numb with fear. Some of the scenes may be bloody. I hope they will. I like to have the whole play fairly drip blood."

"Wouldn't that be perfectly lovely!" says I. "And I know just the thing, Barry. Up on East 57th street is a big slaughter house. You might dramatize that. You could call the piece 'Gory Gory, Swift and Armour' or something of the kind, and you could——"

"Please, Trilby May!" he protested. "Can't you see I'm very much in earnest about this? If you can't listen seriously let's go back."

"Sorry," says I. "I'll be good. And I see exactly what you're aiming at. Something after the style of those shockers O'Brien has been putting out."

"Well," admits Barry, "perhaps I am working along the same general line. But only because he dips into the depths after his people, as I shall for mine."

"Then where's the hitch?" I asks. "Why not go ahead and dip?"

"But I don't know any such characters," says Barry. "One doesn't find them at a brownstone front boarding house such as Mrs. Wellby's, or parading up and down 5th avenue. If I could only get hold of some real miserable, wretched human beings; study them at close range, until I had wrung from them the intimate details of their soggy, sodden lives—that would be material worth while."

"Why not do as a painter would?" I asks. "Hunt up a model."

"Eh?" says he, gawking.

"An artist," I goes on, "wouldn't think of trying to draw a down-and-outer without getting some one who looked like the real thing to pose for him. Why shouldn't a playwright do the same? Find your human wretch, buy his sin-soaked story, and then go to it. Simple enough, isn't it?"

"I say!" says Barry, brightening up. "I hadn't thought of that. I don't see why it couldn't be done. Just go out and pick up a model, eh? And then do the play straight from life. Let's—let's look around."

"Not on this part of 5th avenue, though, Barry," says I. "Here we are in the midst of a gay throng of smart shop girls and prosperious buttonhole makers. But a few blocks east of here you can pick up specimens, though. Suppose we try 2d avenue."

"Of course," says he. "That's what I meant."

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SO over there we went. And I'll say it was messy and dirty and dingy enough. Have you been along East 14th street lately? I don't know why it's torn up, or how long it has been that way, or what's happened to the street-cleaning gang over there, but several blocks look about as tidy as an ash dump. In fact, almost anywhere east of 5th avenue and you can find littered, smelly streets that simply swarm with what Barry likes to call "humanity in the raw." They're raw enough, I'll say, and I suppose they're human. But Barry seemed as pleased and enthusiastic as if he was discovering a new race.

"Look at them, Trilby May!" he exclaimed. "Real people, with real sorrows and sufferings written on their faces."

"SHUCKLIN," SAYS SHE: "MRS. MABEL SHUCKLIN. SURE, I'LL RIDE THERE IN A TAXI IF YOU AIN'T PUTTIN' UP ANY GAME ON ME."

"Not to mention more or less whiskers and traces of yesterday's dust," says I. "What fat women and girls! At least, they're a well nourished lot. How do the poor get that way, I wonder?"

"I don't know," says Barry. "And they're not as ragged as one would expect. Nearly all foreigners, aren't they? Even the signs in the shop windows are foreign. And while most of these men are rough and coarse featured, few of them are exactly—well, the brutish kind."

And the farther he walked the more disappointed he was. About the only really villainous face he found was on a young tough who was driving a taxi and we figured that hiring him to pose would be too expensive. But Barry wouldn't give up the hunt, and at last, just as I was making up my mind to drop out, he gripped me excitedly by the arm.

"Look, Trilby May!" he whispered. "The female coming toward us!"

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THAT'S about what she was, a female person. And a more bedraggled, forlorn, woe-begone specimen would be hard to find. She was thin and gaunt and middle-aged. Her rusty black skirt hung saggy and wrinkled to her runover shoes, and a dingy black veil fell from a dusty black bonnet over her sagged shoulders. As a final touch she had a black bruise under one eye and her lids were red from weeping.

"That's just the type I've been looking for," says Barry, as she hesitated timidly at a street crossing. "I'll bet she could tell a story of wrongs and neglect and sufferings that would wring the hearts of any audience who saw it staged. If I could only get it out of her!"

"Ought to be simple enough," says I. "She looks like the kind who would just jump at a chance to tell her troubles to some one."

"But how," asks Barry, "can I go about——"

"If that's all that bothers you," says I, leave it to me."

"That's certainly bully of you," says he, "and I'm going to take you up on it. But listen, Trilby May, you mustn't go about it as if you were a lawyer cross-examining a witness. To get what I want this poor woman must be handled gently, tenderly, with sympathy. It must be real sympathy, too. Just think! Here is a soul battered by the bludgeonings of fate, a bit of human wreckage that has been tossed about in storms of hate and lova. There's no guessing from what heights she may have fallen, or how long she has dropped; no measuring the sad sweetness she may have tasted, or the bitter mirth she may have known. So when you speak to her——"

"I get you," says I. "Better days stuff, somebody's mother, and all that. I'll remember. Here she comes."

The lady with the black eye was shuffling uncertainly across the street toward us when I nudged Barry one side, stepped straight in front of her, held both hands and gave her one of my well known twisty smiles.

"If it isn't dear Mrs. Pepperfelt!" says I.

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NATURALLY she was surprised. Also she stopped. She had to. But after one good stare at me out of her watery eyes she tried to edge around me and go on. "None o' that, miss," she muttered.

But I blocked her again, and in my best gushy tone I asked: "Don't tell me you've forgotten the little girl who used to live next door to you in Bridgeport—the one you used to give those wonderful jam tarts to? I'm Trilby May Dodge. Now do you remember, Mrs. Pepperfelt?"

"No," says she. "I ain't any Mrs. Pepperfelt, nor never was."

"Now isn't that strange?" says I. "And I was so sure you were. You do look exactly like her, you know. No relation, either? That's odd. Perhaps you wouldn't mind tell me your name?"

But that didn't catch her. "Say, you're mighty slick, ain't you?" says she, leering at me foxily. "One of them charity agents, eh? Well, I'll have you know I ain't been near your office since—since that last time. I ain't been panhandlin', neither. So you can just let me be."

Then I had to smooth it out, but I no sooner convinced her I wasn't from the charity organization than she worked up another suspicion.

"I know," says she. "You're one of them new lady scouts on the dope squad. But, s'elp me, Miss, I never peddled a bit of coke in all my life. Maybe I've had a shot or two, when I had th' price, but that's nobody's business, is it?"

"My dear woman," I assured her. "I'm not a detective of any kind, and you must forgive me for stopping you. Go along if you wish. I apologize humbly. Only you did look so much like the kind neighbor who used to feed me those tarts that I couldn't help it."

"Aw, that's all right, Miss," says she. "But there's a lot of these gumshoe parties around, buttin' into folks' affairs, so you can't be too careful. You did get me scart first off, though."

"May I make it up by doing something for you?" I asks. "How about a cup of tea and some cake?"

The watery eyes glistened. "Tea and cake?" says she. "Where?"

"Would you mind going home with me for it?" I asked. "Not more than eight or ten blocks from here, and I'm sure my friend, Mr. Platt, could find a taxi for us. This is Mr. Platt. Mrs.—er—"

"Shucklin," says she. "Mrs. Mabel Shucklin. Sure I'll ride there in a taxi, if you ain't puttin' up any game on me."

"You shall soon see," says I. "Nothing but tea and cake to pay for frightening you."

"Here we are," says Barry, who had captured a black and yellow with the tin flag up.

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SO, less than a half hour later, we were grouped around the little table in the studio, and Barry's dramatic model, under the spell of her second cup of hot oolong, was revealing the sad sweet story of her career. About all that was necessary was to give her the cue and put in a question now and then.

"As I says to Mrs. Greble only yesterday," runs on Mrs. Shucklin, "'tis a hard life us women has. We raise up children, and work our fingers to the bone for 'em, and what thanks do we get? A poke in the eye. That's what my boy Bill gimme night before last."

"Your own son did that?" gasps Barry.

Mrs. Shucklin nodded, a little proudly, I thought. "And it aint the first time, either," says she, "nor likely the last. Many's the one I got from his old man, too, and he knows it. Like father, like son, they say. And true it is. All he's got for his old mother is a poke in the eye."

"But why?" I asked. "And have some more cake."

"Thanks," says she, taking another slice. "For nothing at all it was. He's a steam fitter, that Bill of mine. Makes good money, and lives in a nice flat over on 6th avenue. You ought to see the way he dresses up that Lizzie McCune what he married—silk stockin's, and crepe de chine skirts, and fancy blouses. Has her hair waved twice a month, and puts rouge on her face. Like a reg'lar chorus girl she looks. I tell her so, too. No respectable young woman would go out like that. I said to Bill."

"Oh, you did?" says I. "And was that when he——"

"No," says Mrs. Shucklin, tucking some stray crumbs into her mouth corner. "I was always tellin' 'em that, both of 'em. You see, I kinda suspected her. Anyway, she got Bill away from me. Used to pay the rent for our two rooms. Bill did, 'till he got to runnin' after this Lizzie McCune. And when they got married he left me flat. Said I was an old rummy and could look out for myself. Said he'd found him a good wife and now he would go his way and I could go mine. Good wife! Gawd! Lizzie McCune that he married out of a laundry and met at a Coney Island dance hall! I know her kind. But she's a sly one. I never could get anything on her, though I used to go around there a lot. Couldn't get her to tell me things, either. But she knows what I think of her, all right. Shucklin ain't one to spare words, and maybe when I had a drink or two in me I didn't give it to her straight. To Bill, too. And just for that he throws me out and tells me never to darken his door again. Me, his poor old mother! Nice talk was, wa'n't it?

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"BUT I couldn't keep away. It ain't natural I should. I guess a mother's gotta right to see how her own son's bein' treated. And anyway, I didn't know he was comin' home so early that night. He caught me tellin' Lizzie a few things. She was sniffin', she was so mad. And I expect that's why Bill soaked me this last one. I thought I was killed. Dragged me down two flight of stairs, too, he did, and threw me out in the street, with all the neighbors lookin' on.

"Oh, well! As I tell Mrs. Greble, 'tis a hard life we women lead. Nothin' but trouble, from cradle to the grave. M-m-m. That's good cake, Miss. Thanks. I don't mind if I do."

While she was finishing the last of the cake I shot one inquiring glance over at Barry. He seemed to understand. Anyway, he shrugged his shoulders and shook his head. So a moment later I hinted to Mrs. Shucklin that the party was over. In fact, I waved her toward the door.

"If I were you, Mrs. Shucklin," I suggested, "I think I should stay away from Bill and his wife."

"Maybe I'd better," says she. "He said next time he'd finish the job. If he went to the chair for it. I guess I'll lay off 'em both. But say, dearie——"

As she was leaning against the doorway and leering foxily at me again I knew she had something more to say.

"Yes?" says I.

"You couldn't spare me a dollar or two, could you, dearie?" she asked.

"No," says I. "But Mr. Platt might—this once. How about it, Barry?"

And he seemed willing enough to speed her on the way at the price.

"Bah!" says he, as the door closed after her.

"Indicating bitter mirth, or sad sweetness?" says I. "And did you get a story that would wring their hearts, Barry boy?"

"I got cured, that's what I got," says he. "O'Brien can have her and all her kind. He's welcome. I wouldn't put anything as soggy and sordid as that on the stage if I could. Me for comedy."

"I hope you stick to it, Barry," says I. "That is, if you're planning a part for me. I don't think I'd be a great hit as Mrs. Shucklin, and I know I'd hate being poked in the eye every night. Come on. Let's go around to Tortoni's and forget the depths."

ATTEMPTING TO SOLVE PROBLEM OF AMERICAN GIRL STUDENTS IN PARIS

Sterling Heilig, Writing From French Capital, Says Girls Received "Never Such Care as Now," But That the Problem Remains—Life in An Attic—Keeping Up Appearances and Obtaining Food at Afternoon Teas—The Search for Board and Lodging With French Families.

MISS G—'S LONELY PARIS ATTIC. "I HAVE NOT FOUND THAT SUITABLE FRENCH FAMILY," SHE SAYS.

BY STERLING HEILIG.

PARIS, June 15, 1922.

"MY people had the usual idea about Paris," she said. "For a girl to go to Paris alone meant making straight for the lower regions. They gave their consent reluctantly, only on condition that I find in advance a suitable French family to live with."

She sat in her lonely Paris attic and rubbed her nose meditatively.

"I have not yet found that family," she said.

Is Miss G—— unreasonable in her ideals of a "suitable French family"?

Perhaps, because there are hundreds such families, since the war and propaganda of our girl war workers. Is she special? Or perhaps merely ignorant of present conditions favoring American students in Paris?

Neither, because there are hundreds like her, in a similar situation, sometimes in attics, sometimes in ramshackle studios, sometimes keeping up an appearance in hotels too dear for them to eat meals also. Yet never was so much being done for American girl students as at present.

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PARENTS, at home, who desire to get into direct correspondence on this subject, perhaps to have their daughters write and make arrangements in advance, can freely address the following: The American Students' Home (for girls), 11 Rue Ferou, near the Luxembourg Gardens, run by the American Welfare Center; the American Art Students' Club (girls), of the Rue de Chevreuse, originally established by Mrs. Whitelaw Reid. The address is No. 4. It is opening again since the war.

And for French families, whose culture and niceness are guaranteed and whose one ambition is to receive American girl students as boarders, write to: The International Guild (for students of the French language in particular), 6 Rue de la Sorbonne. It is connected with the university and patronized by the American and British ambassadors. And the American University Union, 1 Rue Fleurus. It is a great and up-to-date students' technical center, dealing with French university and government. It grew out of a war-time organization of principal American colleges, and among fifty other things, it (like the International Guild), maintains a revised list of French families.

Hundreds of American girl students have profited by these addresses. Hundreds of others are still frying sausages in attics, sneezing in ramshackle studios, or keeping up an appearance in hotels too dear for them to pay for lessons also.

I want Miss G——, in her studio, to profit. Nothing doing.

"I know all about the families," she laughed, happily, "and I don't need them, or the hostels. Dear train with an American vocal stuletting me their Paris flat for a nominal $20 per month. It is like a gift. They want me to keep it inhabited (because of its valuables) while they make a home trip. A girl friend and I will live there, like rich girls. Our own beautiful Paris flat, for six months!"

Doubtless Miss G—— will then return to her attic.

None can budge this sort of thing. It is typical. It grows in Paris. The timid girl who hadn't it, well, she can easily acquire it. It is the artistic temperament, the divine melancholy of the learned, the intense craving of genius for its own initiative. And it don't gee-haw with a French family.

It is smeared all over the subject. It is a wonder that they can tolerate the bossing of teachers, professors, trainers nad coaches!

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CATCH me telling an American student girl to board in a French family. Board in a French family?

Why, I came up from Nice on the train with an American vocal student dent girl, clear-eyed, earnest, modest, charming, who stood two hours in the car corridor telling me how impossible it is to pursue the artistic life even when boarding in your own American family in Paris.

Exactly. Her mother and sisters had come over to Paris to make a home for her—and it was killing her career! How could she put her heart into artistic work when overwhelmed with sordid household cares? Why, yes, it comes to that. Don't she have to hear the sordid household stuff talked about all day?

I tried to sow good seed.

"Would it not be more sordid to go broke in a Paris hotel?" I asked. (Miss R—— is great for a hotel. She had found an humdinger down in Italy.)

"Oh, no!" she answered. "Such risks are stimulating to the artiste! They are not sordid."

"Or to live alone in a Paris attic?" I suggested.

"I wouldn't!" she bridled. "But, a Paris attic would not scare me. Students and attics go together. It is the everyday commonplace that throws cold water on the artiste!"

There are hundreds of American girl vocal music students in European hotels that are too dear for them. They make a hotel type, as there is an attic type—including muggerers in draughty studios before they learn to paint.

Miss R—— would like to adventure like Miss V——, a friend of hers, who will live in a smart hotel (and has small money left for eats), because she knows that she has got to meet great singers, managers and impresarios on their travels, and create an impression on the entertaining moneyed folks who pay girls to sing at musicals.

These girl students dress somehow. For them was created Miss Naomi Dubellet's work of second-hand party gowns, carried on still by her sister.

They take taxicabs. (The furnishing of taxicab money to students is yet to be undertaken.)

They lack the nourishing food so necessary to a great singer, and often have not enough money left to keep up lessons with the professors and side-line coaches which they should have—sacrificing all to "produce themselves," to get into notice, before they have qualified.

"One has got to work hard these days," says Miss V——, citing a great American soprano who did manage to break in by these reckless methods.

ALAS! we who lived in Paris before the war knew a sweet girl vocal student who worked hard, who was anything but commonplace, and yet who did not break through by the reckless methods now so popular.

The great ladies who received Miss A—— at their afternoon teas were genuinely shocked when they learned that she had not starved to death at the Hotel Continental—not starved, but just died from anemia because she had been too long without regular, nourishing meals.

Miss A—— had attempted to live on the afternoon teas to which she was invited. To the end, she kept her room at the big hotel. The room, the hotel, the address, the front! Kind ladies who saw her slip strawberry tarts into her handbag mercifully looked the other way.

Paris is so polite!

Miss H——, already a painter of reputation, paints her pictures in a sixth-story room—not a studio—in which the wretched light comes from one small window.

If Miss H—— (who is somebody!) does so, how can any welfare center prevail against girl students of painting who believe that the cafes of the "Rotonde" and the "Dome" are true art centers of Paris?

Some carry a cane, and some smoke a pipe.

Others are just nice girls who find that they can sell their work at the "Rotonde" and practically nowhere else. Now, how can you frequent a smoky town and not get some few smoke flakes on your otherwise sweet white face?

It is the cranky American Latin quarter, sort of Greenwich Village in the midst of the big, busy Latin quarter that has, every year, less time for fooling. But you can sell pictures at the "Rotonde." The proprietor of the cafe, to whom all these Americans are heroes, gives a big room for a sort of permanent salon for them. Any American can hang there—and a few Turks, Bessarabians, Scythians and Japs. And, as any old price goes, hundreds, simply, of the paintings are grabbed up by tourists—who would fear the prices of a proper salon.

Parents at home, how can you, at 3,000 miles, beat an ideal?

For, sure, this Latin quarter stuff is an ideal—and, alas, ideal of men! It is girls plotting on a masculine map, for all but vocal music. And the vocal music traditions are of—well, you know.

Forewarned is nothing. Miss G—— before she struck her attic, knew all any one could tell her. So Miss C——, Miss D——, Miss E——. And Miss F——, who is dancing at the Acacias—as dancing partner of a young American dentist who is killing time to pass his French examinations. He draws her pay. The male member of a team is bound, by contract, to furnish his own dancing partner. So, you see, she has become an artist swiftly.

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MISS G——, brave girl, now in her attic, was not permitted to risk Paris by her parents (it will be remembered) until she had engaged board definitely in a French family.

"At home I heard of an order of English nuns," she says, "who run a home for girls arriving in Paris. There was nothing to be said against this, so they let me make the plunge. The little English convent was my first Paris stopping place. It was so sweet and quiet and cool and gentle. But as everybody in the house spoke English, I might as well have been in Trenton, N. J., for all the language I was picking up."

Squirm No. 1.

Completely legitimate.

Squirm No. 1 (continued).

"The dear sisters realized my point of view," continued the American girl student in Paris, who claims that an American girl student in Paris ought to learn French to continue her studies. "So they gave me an introduction to the French sisters of St. Vincent de Paul, who keep a large housekeeping school in the Rue Furstembourg, in the heart of the Latin Quarter."

All to the good, the Latin Quarter!

The sisters of St. Vincent de Paul turned out to be full up when she arrived.

Squirm No. 2.

Entirely legitimate.

They admitted Miss G—— to their classes and recommended her to a woman who took a few boarders.

The woman was "full up," too.

Squirm No. 3.

Absolutely legitimate.

She gave Miss G—— table board, the use of her sitting room and found for her this charming attic.

"It slants, you see; but it is so quiet and peaceful."

It costs her to live thus some $75 per month, not including laundry, car fare, books or extras.

For the same price, or less, she could have—but what's the use?

She has her attic.

Beneath its slanting roof dwells an ideal——

* * * where the attic bird
Trills her thick-warbled notes the summer long!

One of Nature's Dredges.

CRATERS of old volcanoes whose tricks are still unknown, and craters that have just taught men to beware of them, have been studied with unusual care. Interesting experiences have been common. Hardly one of the reports of scientists on volcanoes is without some tale of adventure in which the human side appeals even more strongly than the scientific. Here is the story of the adventure one party had on Mont Pelee, where such a disaster occurred some years ago.

They were passing on their return trip over the rugged, lava-like mudflows, when three sharp peals of thunder rang through the air. Rolling up over the mountain top was a great brown, convoluting cloud. It ascended in dark, rounded masses, stately yet with great speed, thousands and thousands of twisting, worming globules, brain-shaped, cauliflower-topped, dark almost to blackness.

As it shot direct from the crater, this menacing shape spread out and charged toward the party down the mountainside.

Running would, it was at once realized, be useless. The eruption and its nearness held the men in wonder and dread, so that they did not call to their companions below, but waited until they had labored half-way up the slope, when the shout went up, "Look at the mountain!" and a scramble was made for the highest point on the flat above. As the leader of the party gained it in hard breath and looked back a black thing jumped from behind a bend in the canyon.

With a heavy, earthy roar, a plunging wall of blackish stuff hurled itself with fearful speed against the side of the ravine, bounded to the opposite slope and tore it down. It lashed and tore away the earth like paper.

The men saw the banks melt away as in a nightmare. Sand, pebbles and masses of rock flew into the air before the resistless onslaught, and fell into the raging flood and were borne away like chaff. They could feel the shock of the ponderous mass plowing through the ground, as when a train at high speed grinds the rails. Looking down in wonder, awe and, perhaps, fright, not one of the party had spoken a word.

In twenty minutes the sixty-foot channel of the main stream was dug four feet below the mouth of a tributary, which, oozing in silent, molasses-like surges, dropped in a mudfall into the river.

The men watched for half an hour, by which time the stream had decreased a third, and the erosion of its banks was nearly ended. Already, however, the catastrophe had dredged the channel to a depth of ten feet and had carried off this vast load into the sea. And when, in the gathering darkness, the party reached the coalesced mouths of the two rivers, the Seche and the Blanche, the hot ash-beds there, lying over the dead of the Guerin sugar works, were sending out such heavy volumes of steam that the party's sloop had left her mooring and was standing well offshore.